Saskatchewan Children's Advocate

2001 Annual Report

The Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office

Advocating with children, youth and their natural advocates to ensure the rights of children and youth are respected and valued.

The Saskatchewan Children's ADVOCATE Office

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SASKATCHEWAN

102-05270/

May 2002

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Legislative Building
Province of Saskatchewan
Regina, Saskatchewan

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with *The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act*, it is my privilege to submit to you and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly my seventh Annual Report as Children's Advocate.

Respectfully,

D Parker-Loewen

Deborah Parker-Loewen, Ph.D.
Children's Advocate

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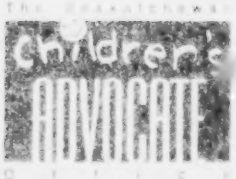
The Children's Advocate is an officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and acts pursuant to *The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act*.



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Executive Summary

This Annual Report provides the people of Saskatchewan with an overview of the work undertaken by the Children's Advocate Office (CAO) in 2001. In addition, this report highlights a number of issues that impact on Saskatchewan children.

Public Education

Given the vast number of challenges facing northern residents, the CAO, Provincial Ombudsman and Human Rights Commission were concerned by the apparent under-representation of issues raised with the offices by northern residents. Prompted by this concern, the three offices visited nine northern communities between November 2000 and January 2002. The goal of the trips was to determine how each office can provide more effective services in northern Saskatchewan. In light of the issues raised throughout the meetings, as well as through individual contacts made by the CAO with members of northern communities, the CAO has prioritized providing services for the children of the north.

The Provincial Youth Delegation (PYD) continued to promote the voices of youth in Saskatchewan. The major initiative for the PYD during 2001 was the commitment to further the recommendations made at the *Mind the Gap* youth/adult partnership conference in November 2000. The PYD is currently looking at options for activities that would once again bring adults and youth together to put the recommendations into action. Recommendations were developed in seven key areas, which impact youth in Saskatchewan.

Staff responded to over 150 requests for information and completed approximately 100 presentations about the role of the CAO and issues relating to the well-being of children.

Individual and Group Advocacy

The number of individual requests for service continued to grow in 2001, increasing by 16 percent over the previous year. This increase can be attributed almost entirely to increases in calls relating to health issues, multiple department concerns and issues where no special department was identified. As in previous years, the majority of concerns raised with the CAO focused on the Department of Social Services (DSS), representing 54 percent of all calls. Parents continue to represent the largest contact group, representing 44 percent of all calls.

Systemic Advocacy

The CAO actively identifies specific systemic issues impacting on children and youth. In 2001, the CAO developed a formal advocacy framework to assist the office in defining systemic issues. Eight systemic issues were prioritized in 2001. The issues include:

- Standards of care in residential custody and family services facilities;
- Treatment of youth held in RCMP cells and/or waiting to be transported;
- Supervision of youth in provincial court cells;
- Educational experiences of youth in custody facilities;
- Access to mental health services;
- Services for children with disabilities;
- Dispute resolution in the school environment; and
- Safeguards for children and youth in foster and group home care.

In June 2001, the DSS publicly responded to the *Children and Youth in Care Review: Listen to Their Voices*, by announcing a major redesign of child welfare in Saskatchewan. While it is true that there are still many issues to address, the CAO is convinced that there is a commitment to making changes to improve the system for children. However, the goals identified by the DSS must be realized in order for Saskatchewan children and families to be supported and nurtured.

Special Report: Dispute Resolution in the School Environment

The CAO initiated a project to compare the review and appeal processes found within provincial and territorial legislation in Canada. The comparison project identified seven concerns regarding dispute resolution in Saskatchewan schools:

1. The absence of an external, independent review process.
2. The absence of student access to the mediation process.
3. The inconsistency of school division policies.
4. The absence of a requirement for school boards to make appropriate educational arrangements when a child is suspended or expelled.
5. The absence of a legislated accommodation, when school boards are considering suspending or expelling students with special needs.
6. The need for a clear process for multiple suspensions.
7. The absence of a review process for expulsions.

Community Advocacy

The CAO has identified several issues, which we have defined as community advocacy. The CAO is committed to staying informed on these matters and, where appropriate, raising awareness of the issues. Issues include:

- The abuse and exploitation of children through the sex trade;
- Age of consent to medical treatment; and
- *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

Children's Advocate

From the Children's Advocate

Much is being done in Saskatchewan with and for children. Of this we can all be very proud. I see a concerted effort being made within government and in communities to find ways to involve children and youth more effectively in the decision-making that impacts on their lives. I see progress in terms of the service delivery systems. Examples of this progress are detailed throughout this report. I also see a continued need for further action, increased vigilance, indeed, for greater sensitivity to the basic human needs of children and youth.

It is difficult to actually know what is changing for children when we still do not have a set of indicators of children's well-being articulated for the children of our province. There are some pockets of information about children's well-being scattered throughout various reports and documents.

This information has not yet been compiled in a comprehensive manner that lets the public know what is changing and for which children. This must be done in order for us to understand if the services and programs being offered to children are making a difference.

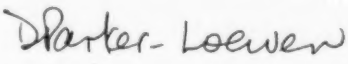
The Saskatchewan Action Plan for Children has served this province well and, in my view, now needs to be renewed with clearly defined goals and expected outcomes.

What do we want to see change and how are we going to go about it? We have an opportunity for substantial change in Saskatchewan if the recommendations from the Role of the Schools report are fully implemented. We need to seize this opportunity in our province and make inclusive education and inclusive child services the norm rather than the exception.

Advocacy work such as we do in our office is, from time to time, tough—for us and for the officials. We strive to work in a highly respectful manner while advocating for all children to be treated in accordance with their entitlements and basic human rights.

Once again, I want to sincerely thank the staff in my office and the public officials that we work with for your dedicated commitment to children. While we may not always agree on what constitutes a basic right for a child, my staff and I sincerely appreciate the cooperation that we regularly receive from government officials when we raise matters of concern.

This past year a senior official in government described me as "relentless." I take this as a compliment and thank this person for reminding me that indeed this Office has a responsibility to remain relentless as we pursue our goal to make a positive difference in the lives of children.



Deborah Parker-Loewen
Children's Advocate
Province of Saskatchewan

"For those of us who work with young children it is often difficult to know how to include their voices in our decision-making processes. It takes an extra act of imagination to put ourselves in the shoes of four-year-olds so that we can take their perspective into account. Yet if we fail to do so, our best intentions may go awry. As children grow older, it becomes easier to involve them more directly but it still takes an effort to do so respectfully. This is not to say that children always know what is best for them or that we should burden them with heavy choices. But they usually know what won't work and we should listen to them to learn what will." *The Honourable Landon Pearson, Senate of Canada.*

(Canadian Child Care Federation, 2001).

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The Children's Advocate Office conducts public education to raise the profile of the rights of all children in Saskatchewan. The Office strives to develop and enhance a sense of individual and community responsibility for protecting and promoting children's rights.

NEED A HAND !?!

call

Public Education

Advocacy & Northern Saskatchewan

Many northern residents live in circumstances of isolation, poverty, illness, neglect and abuse and their resources for coping with such circumstances may differ from those available in more populated regions of the province. Many northern residents rely, in varying degree, on government services. Given the vast number of challenges facing northern residents, the Children's Advocate, the Provincial Ombudsman and the Chief Commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission were concerned by the apparent under-representation of complaints that each office receives from northern residents.

Prompted by this concern, the three offices jointly visited nine northern communities: Beauval, Creighton, Fond du Lac, Ile-a-la-Crosse, La Loche, Pelican Narrows, Sandy Bay, Stony Rapids and La Ronge. The trips took place November 2000, May 2001 and October 2001, with a final trip planned for January 2002. The goals of the trips were to acquaint northern residents with the services of the three offices, but most importantly to listen to concerns about rights, fairness, equality and equity and to learn how each of the offices might provide more effective and more valuable services.

"...the study shows that housing disrepair and crowding bear a relationship to child development. The potential exists for detrimental long-term effects on children raised in crowded dwellings in disrepair. The findings suggest that these children are more at risk of poor health, asthma, poor school performance, aggressive behaviours and trouble with the law... The fact that the trend for all developmental outcomes was consistently negative for insufficient housing conditions is a powerful message."

(Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, May, 2000).

In each community the offices held an informal public meeting or attended meetings with community agencies. Participants included elders, police, band councillors, social workers, community leaders and interested residents. The meetings consisted of group and individual discussions, as well as private interviews to address personal complaints.

What We Heard

None of the issues raised were new to the three offices and most would not be new to people in Saskatchewan. However, the number and range of concerns raised was truly staggering. The offices were constantly impressed by the level of concern, commitment and passion expressed by residents of these communities. Through this experience, each office learned that they have a role, but that current practices may need to be adjusted to more effectively assist members of these northern communities.

A Role for the CAO

The north has a young, growing population with almost 40 percent under 15 years of age, as compared to 23 percent throughout Saskatchewan. Many of the issues identified specifically concern young people. The CAO knows that northern Saskatchewan children and youth have not had sufficient access to the services of the CAO.

From left to right: Donna Scott, Chief Commissioner for the Human Rights Commission; Deborah Parker Loewen, Children's Advocate; and Elaine Thomas, Advocate. Photo taken in Stony Rapids, Saskatchewan.

Fond du Lac, Saskatchewan

From left to right: Barb Tomkins, Provincial Ombudsman; Deborah Parker Loewen; and Donna Scott. Photo taken in Stony Rapids, Saskatchewan.

In light of this, the CAO has prioritized serving the children of the north. Current plans are to:

- Increase the profile and accessibility of the CAO in the north through more staff visits to northern communities, and through presentations at events where northern residents or those that serve them are present.
- Develop key contacts and partnerships in northern communities and with First Nations and Metis agencies that serve the north.
- Look into alternatives for delivering effective service to small, geographically remote communities.

Getting the Word Out

The CAO has been serving Saskatchewan children for seven years, and still many children and youth are not aware of the Office and its role to assist young people. The CAO is looking at new ways of reaching children and youth. Plans are underway to develop a child/youth friendly website which will be created in 2002.

"Adults rarely recognize youth as a community resource and they resist acknowledging youth as people who can contribute to their own health and well-being. Tullio Caputo (1998) identified six barriers that impede communication between adults and youth and prevent the full participation of youth in program development and delivery. These are: stereotypes about youth, conflicting goals and objectives for youth programs, lack of continuity (as youth grow up and move on), unequal participation, the need for training in communication and organizational skills, and adult resistance to sharing power. Are we hearing the voices of youth? Not yet."

(Canadian Institute of Child Health, 2000).

In 2001, staff made approximately 100 presentations about the role of the CAO and issues relating to the interests and well-being of children. Staff responded to over 150 requests for information on such topics as children's advocacy, children's rights, foster care, child deaths, youth participation, corporal punishment, poverty and sexual exploitation of children and youth to name just a few.

The Provincial Youth Delegation

By promoting the voices of youth in Saskatchewan, the Provincial Youth Delegation (PYD) advances the interests and well-being of children and youth. An initiative of the CAO, the PYD assists the CAO by providing a direct link to the voices and experience of young people themselves. The PYD has been working towards the realization of its goals since 1998. Participants come from across Saskatchewan and have a variety of interests and experiences in youth and community activities.

During 2001, the structure of the PYD was reorganized. When first formed, between 25 and 30 young people would gather annually to give direction to a 12-member Steering Committee which would spearhead the group's annual agenda. The two-committee system was recently replaced with a smaller more unified system of 15 youth that comprises the entirety of the PYD. Every spring, the PYD recruits new members between the ages of 15 and 19 years of age. All the youth involved have a strong commitment to the philosophy of youth participation.

PYD Annual Meeting, Watrous, Saskatchewan, August 2001.

Over the past few years, PYD members have demonstrated strong personal commitment to youth participation, responding to numerous requests by government and community groups for the "youth perspective." These activities have included participation in the Department of Education's Task Force on the Role of the Schools, Saskatoon's Working Group on Child Sexual Exploitation, the Forum on Children Not in School, and the Public Legal Education Association (PLEA) Youth for Human Rights Conference. In addition, delegates have the opportunity to sit on boards and councils in the province. Several of the delegates are youth representatives on the Saskatchewan Council on Children, and the Northern Human Services Partnership (NHSP), as well as many others.

A major initiative for the PYD during 2001 was the commitment to furthering the recommendations made at the *Mind the Gap* youth/adult partnership conference in November 2000. In spring 2001, PYD representatives met with the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation, the Honourable Joanne Crofford, to discuss ways to ensure that the recommendations and strategies developed at the conference become a reality. The PYD is encouraged by the commitment shown by the Minister and her Department. The Department indicated that they will consider the the recommendations and strategies in developing future initiatives. In addition, the PYD is currently looking at options for activities that would once again bring adults and youth together to put the recommendations into action.

Youth Recommendations and Strategies (November 2000)

Issue #1: The Media
Issue #2: Inaccurate Assumptions of Youth
Issue #3: Making Decisions
Issue #4: Tokenism and Logistics of Youth Representation
Issue #5: Youth Sexual Health/Ill-Health
Issue #6: Involving Youth at Risk
Issue #7: Youth Leadership/Skills Development

(For a complete listing of the recommendations, please consult the CAO website at www.legassembly.sk.ca/childadvocate/)

The Children's Advocate Office has the authority to receive and review any matter related to government services affecting a child or a group of children. Individual and group advocacy services include:

Assisting people to become effective self-advocates by providing information, strategies, appropriate contacts and options.

Assisting young people who are receiving government services to express their viewpoint and have it considered when decisions are being made that affect them.

Working to ensure that all children, especially vulnerable children, are treated in accordance with existing government practice, policy and legislation.

Taking further action when a matter affecting a child or group of children is not resolved or if policy concerns remain. This may include reviewing and investigating all information available and making recommendations to the government for change.

Child Advocate
Territorial

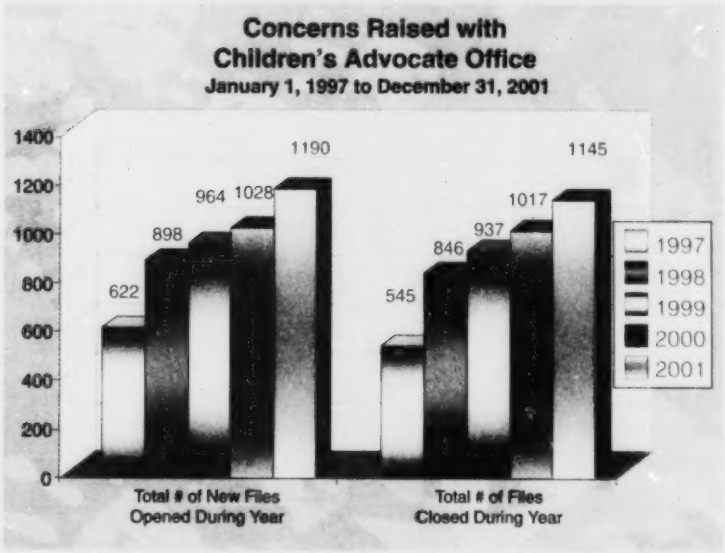
Individual and Group Advocacy

One of the primary functions of the CAO is to provide individual and group advocacy services for individuals who contact the Office. The goal of the CAO is to provide advocacy services that are respectful, appropriate and timely.

Over the course of any year, the CAO staff speak to and meet with many government and agency personnel including front-line workers, supervisors, directors, policy-makers, and Deputy Ministers of provincial government departments and agencies. Inevitably, along the way, we challenge these people to critically view their systems, policies and procedures and recommend adaptations to more effectively serve children and youth.

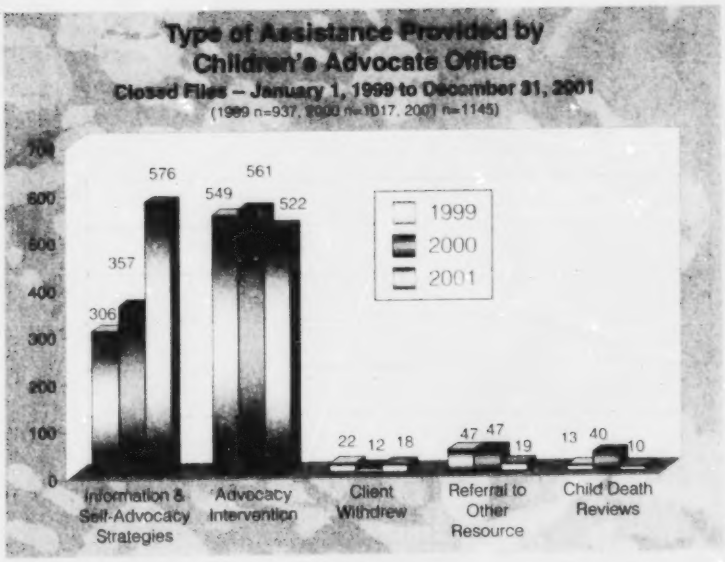
Continuing to Grow

The number of requests for service that the CAO responded to in any given year has steadily increased since the Office was created in 1994. This year was no exception. Over the past year, the CAO received and responded to 1190 requests for service. This was an increase of 16 percent over the previous year. The requests for service have increased from 52 requests per month in 1997 to 99 per month in 2001. The continual rise in demand for services has placed additional pressure on advocacy service staff as well as administrative support staff.



Type of Assistance

Various forms of advocacy services are provided to the children, youth and others who contact the CAO requesting assistance. Services include self-advocacy strategies, providing information on government policies and procedures, negotiation with decision-makers and referral services.

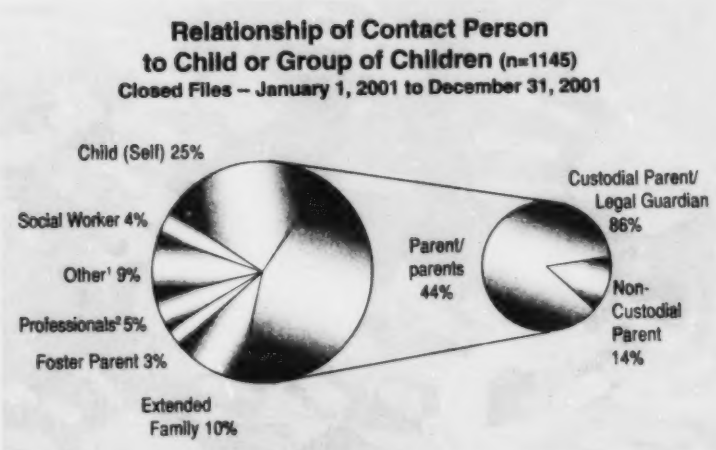


If issues cannot be resolved using these methods, further advocacy intervention may be required. The next level of intervention may include liaison with multiple government departments and organizations; facilitation of and participation in case conferences and meetings; or, on a limited basis, conducting formal investigations.

Who is Calling?

Issues are brought to the attention of the CAO by children and youth as well as others involved in their lives. The number of children and youth contacting the CAO represented 25 percent of the total requests for service in 2001.

As in previous years, parents requesting service on behalf of a child or youth constituted the largest contact group, representing 44 percent of all calls. Requests for service from foster parents represent only three percent of calls received by the CAO. The CAO is committed to working with foster parents to build advocacy capacity and assist them to represent the needs of the children and youth in their care.


Relationship of Contact Person to Child or Group of Children (n=1145)
Closed Files – January 1, 2001 to December 31, 2001
Child (Self) 25%
Social Worker 4%
Other[1] 9%
Professionals[2] 5%
Foster Parent 3%
Extended Family 10%
Parent/ parents 44%
Custodial Parent/ Legal Guardian 86%
Non-Custodial Parent 14%

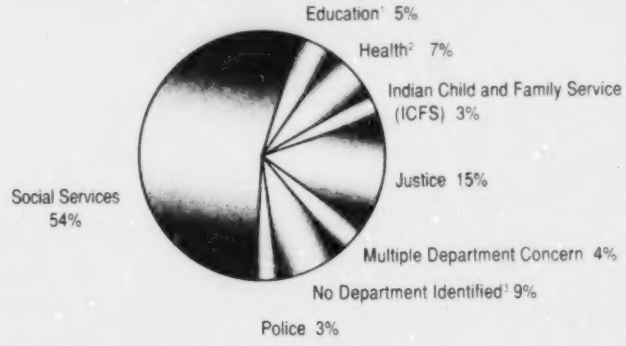
[1] Includes interested third parties such as band representatives, babysitters, neighbours, etc. Also includes those individuals who have contacted the Office who do not have any relationship with a specific child.

[2] Includes those individuals that have a professional relationship with the child such, as health care professionals, judges, community-home operators, teachers, etc.

Why are They Calling?

As in previous years, the majority of concerns raised with the CAO focused on the Department of Social Services (DSS), representing 54 percent of all calls. Calls regarding Justice issues were the next largest group at 15 percent. As noted earlier, the CAO had a 16 percent increase in the total number of calls that it received in 2001. This increase can be attributed almost entirely to increases in calls relating to health issues, multiple department concerns and issues where no specific department was identified.

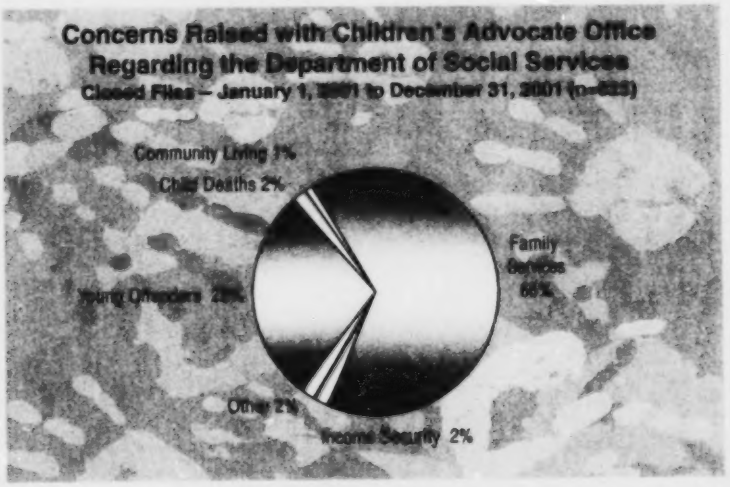
Concerns Raised with Children's Advocate Office Listed by Government Department or Agency (n=1145)
Closed Files – January 1, 2001 to December 31, 2001



[1] Represents Department & School Boards
[2] Represents Department & Health Boards
[3] Represents requests for general information about services for children; requests for services where a referral was made to a department agency not under the scope of the CAO; or where the number of calls concerning a department agency are too small to report.

Social Services

The CAO dealt with 625 matters concerning services provided by the DSS. This number of calls has remained virtually unchanged over the past three years (628 in 1999; 639 in 2000; 625 in 2001).



Family Services

The DSS provides a number of services to the children and youth of Saskatchewan through the Family and Youth Services Division. Of the 625 requests related to the DSS, 65 percent were about the provision of Family Services. As in years past, disagreement with case plans and decisions made by social services workers constitute the majority of the concerns brought to the CAO.

Case Examples

Family Services – Child Placement

Issue: The DSS was planning on moving two children, aged 9 and 10 years, from a foster home. The foster parent wanted the children to stay and was also concerned about the stability of the children given the frequent moves and school changes they had experienced.

Background: The children had been living with the foster family for four months and had not had any visits from the worker. The worker called the foster parent and advised that the children were going to be moved at an undetermined future date so that they could live closer to their mother. The children had been in other foster homes before and they have other siblings in different foster homes.

Action: An Advocate met with the children, who said that while they liked living in this foster home, they also would like to live closer to their mom. They had not seen their worker since they moved into this foster home and they didn't know what the plans were for them. They hadn't seen their mother for about three months and they also wanted to see their other siblings and their grandmother more often. If they had to move, they wanted their worker to come and talk to them. The Advocate made several attempts to meet with the worker and eventually met with the supervisor. The supervisor advised that the children were going to be moved at the end of the summer and that visits would occur prior to the move. He acknowledged that the worker had not complied with the DSS minimum requirements for worker contact with the children.

Outcome: The children were moved shortly after the meeting between the Advocate and the supervisor, and with limited planning with the children and foster family. The children were advised that they could call the Advocate at any time. The Advocate also met with the worker to once again raise concerns about the lack of case planning and the non-compliance with the DSS contact standards. The worker acknowledged that she did not follow the policies and that, in the future, she would adhere to the DSS best practice standards.

Young Offender Services – Self-Advocacy Works

Issue: A young person in a secure custody facility was denied telephone contact with her brother.

Background: The youth wanted to call her brother on the telephone but was denied the contact because her brother had recently been incarcerated. The youth was upset about this, particularly because she had no other family members that she considered close. Her brother had permission from his probation officer to call her.

Action: The youth was advised to use the internal appeal process in the secure custody facility and write a letter to the Director outlining her request.

Outcome: The Director reviewed the appeal and permitted this youth to contact her brother by telephone.

Young Offender Services – Appeals Take Time

Issue: A young person contacted the CAO because he believed he was unfairly confined to his room.

Background: Following an incident in a secure custody facility unit, all youth on the unit were confined to their rooms. This young person persistently knocked on the door of his room and asked to contact the CAO. He was informed that he could call the CAO later. Not satisfied with that response from the staff, the youth continued to knock on his door. Staff determined that this youth was acting in a disrespectful manner and placed him in handcuffs and restraints in an isolation room.

Action: The youth wrote to the facility Director about this matter and subsequently contacted the CAO about the length of time it took to get a response to his appeal from the Director. The Advocate met with the youth and the Director. The Director supported the staff decision to place this youth in isolation for 24 hours due to his disrespectful behavior. He acknowledged that the time taken to review appeals such as this needs to be decreased. The Director informed the youth and the Advocate that a new policy was being implemented for processing the appeals.

Outcome: This youth was satisfied with this information and agreed that this file could be closed as resolved.

Youth in Conflict with the Law

Services to young offenders are provided in open and closed custody facilities, community homes and through community-based services such as probation. Contacts by this group of young people remains relatively consistent each year, representing 28 percent of the 625 Social Services concerns raised in 2001.

"While FAS affects people of all origins and socio-economic backgrounds, limited studies of some Aboriginal communities suggest a rate of FAS that may be 10 times higher than in the general population. It is therefore essential to understand the origins of FAS and work with Aboriginal communities to prevent FAS and support those who have this disability... Because of the emotional and sensitive nature of the topic, FAS has traditionally been a hidden and unspoken disability. Denial stems from the relationship between this disorder and alcohol abuse in the communities; people are afraid to address the underlying issues... Unfortunately, addressing the problem is sometimes seen as blaming... Aboriginal communities have a good sense of what they need to know and what they need to do. The work has to be community driven and community led. Outside agencies can support communities by appreciating the context of the issues, trusting the community's voice, and providing both human and financial resources to assist the community in its work."

(The Children's Commission, February, 2001).

Many youth in conflict with the law, especially those from remote northern communities, are vulnerable and may lack natural advocates in their lives to ensure that they are receiving the services to which they are entitled. These services include medical treatment, access to education and the right to be heard when decisions are made about them.

Children with Disabilities

The DSS provides services to children with disabilities who are unable to remain in their own home or require services that the family cannot provide. These children are provided services through the Community Living Division of the DSS. Calls to the CAO concerning the Community Living Division represent only one percent of the DSS calls.

Children with Disabilities – Guardianship

Issue: A mother of a child with disabilities contacted the CAO regarding the agreement she had with the DSS to provide residential care for her son. She was feeling pressured to enter into a long-term care agreement which would mean that her guardianship rights would be transferred to the DSS. This was a problem for her as she wanted to retain the parental rights she had under the current voluntary agreement.

Background: This five-year old was placed in residential care as an infant due to his high medical needs. This placement was made though a voluntary agreement with the DSS (under section 9 of *The Child and Family Services Act*) and continued with repeated renewals of this agreement between the parents and the DSS. The long-term care order agreement that the mother was asked to sign would mean that the Minister of Social Services would have guardianship of her son. She was concerned about what this would mean in terms of her contact with her son and her ability to continue to make decisions about his care.

Action: An Advocate met with the mother and representatives from the Community Living Division of the DSS. The DSS acknowledged that they were seeking a long-term agreement because repeated, short-term, voluntary agreements were not a satisfactory method for obtaining a long-term plan for the child. The current legislation provides limited options for parents of children who, for medical reasons, require an out-of-home placement for their child.

Outcome: Following a series of meetings, the DSS agreed to continue to provide this child with out-of-home residential services on the basis of the voluntary agreement, thus allowing the parent to retain full guardianship rights for her child. In addition, the DSS clarified that these section 9 Agreements would continue for those children in foster care who do not have permanent orders.

Case Examples

ICFS – Foster Parent Disagrees with Agency Plan

Issue: A foster parent called the CAO because she disagreed with the ICFS agency plan to move the one-year-old foster child from her home to live with extended family members on the child's First Nation community.

Background: This child, at age four days, was placed with this foster mother. The foster mom became very attached to the child. The ICFS agency worker located relatives in the child's First Nation community and plans for pre-placement visits were being made. The foster mom wanted to continue to raise this child and offered to make sure that he would have access to cultural activities. The agency decided to proceed with placing the child with his extended family.

Action: The Advocate suggested that the foster mother contact the supervisor and discuss her concerns about the plans for this child. The agency plans appeared consistent with practice and policy and with the long-term goal of children living and growing safely within their family and extended family.

Outcome: While the foster mother continued to disagree with the plan, the baby was moved to an approved foster home on the First Nation community with members of his extended family.

Justice – Parental Dispute about Discipline

Issue: A father called concerned about how his ex-wife disciplines their two children.

Background: The divorced parents have joint custody of their two small children. The father does not agree with the mother spanking the children. He told the CAO that he had tried to talk to his ex-wife about this, but they had been unable to resolve it. In his view, his children were being physically abused by their mother when she spanked them.

Action: The Advocate advised the father that he could contact Social Services and report his concerns about his children's safety to them. He was also provided with information about returning to court to have the custody and access provisions reviewed.

Outcome: The use of reasonable force by parents for the purpose of correcting their children is permitted under Canadian law. All allegations of excessive force against children, including parental use of excessive force to discipline their children, are subject to investigation by child protection authorities.

Education – Teacher Conduct

Issue: A parent of a six-year-old child called the CAO complaining that her son's teacher had taped the boy to his desk at school because he "wouldn't sit still."

Background: This mother told the Advocate that the teacher was taping her son and another child to their desks. The mother had already raised the matter with the school principal, who assured her that the teacher would be told not to do this again. The mother wanted more action than this and subsequently contacted the RCMP. The RCMP advised that they would review this mother's complaint with the crown prosecutor. The mother decided to also call the CAO.

Action: The Advocate advised the mother to contact the school superintendent, the Director of Education for that school division, or to write to the Board of Education. She was also advised that she could contact the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and possibly file a complaint against the teacher. She was advised to call the CAO again if she required further information.

Outcome: The CAO does not have the authority to review or investigate a matter concerning a decision or action of a school division.

"Several experiences of massive loss have disrupted First Nation families and resulted in identity problems and difficulties in functioning. In 1996, more than ten percent of Aboriginal children (age 0-14) were not living with their parents. That is 7 times more compared to non-Aboriginal children. In 1996, three of every ten First Nation children resided in lone parent families, a rate roughtly twice that of the non-First Nation population. Four percent of First Nation children were in the custody of Child and Family Service agencies in 1996/97. Compared to the total number of children in Canada, First Nation children are four times more likely to die from injury. For pre-school aged children, the rate is five times greater."

(McDonald, Ladd, et. al., June 2000)

Indian Child and Family Service (ICFS) Agencies

There are 18 Indian Child and Family Service (ICFS) agencies in Saskatchewan providing services to children and their families under *The Child and Family Services Act*. As such, ICFS agencies fall under the jurisdiction of the Children's Advocate as an "agency of government... directly or indirectly, responsible to the Crown." (*The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act*, As am. by s.s. 2000.) The CAO has identified First Nations children and youth served by ICFS agencies as a group that has not had sufficient access to the services of the CAO. The CAO is working towards ensuring that the children, youth, parents, ICFS agency staff, and others in these jurisdictions are aware of the services provided by the CAO. Concerns regarding ICFS agencies represented three percent of calls to the CAO in 2001.

Justice

Custody and access matters continue to be the primary issue brought to the attention of the CAO regarding the Department of Justice. Custody and access issues represent 13 percent of all calls to the CAO and 87 percent of all Justice calls. The CAO does not have authority to review matters that are before the courts. Individuals requesting assistance are often given information about appeals and processes within the family court system and information about available services provided by the DSS. The total number of custody and access issues has remained fairly consistent from year to year.

The other main issue regarding the Department of Justice concerns the supervision of youth while in provincial court cells. This issue is detailed in the Systemic Advocacy section of this Annual Report.

Education

The CAO has the authority, at the provincial level, to advocate for improvements in the area of education. However, the CAO does not have authority under *The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act* to pursue matters that concern boards of education, teacher services or conflicts between students and teacher/school board authorities. Nonetheless, students and their parents continue to request assistance, representing five percent of all calls to the CAO. In these situations, the CAO provides information about specific sections of *The Education Act* that can be accessed by the caller to assist them in resolving their issue. For more information on this topic, please check the Systemic Advocacy section of this Report.

Case Examples

Health – Mental Health Resources

Issue: The mother of a nine-year-old child who is an in-patient in a mental health facility, called with a number of concerns about the treatment her daughter was receiving in the facility.

Background: The girl was admitted as an in-patient in a predominantly adult psychiatric unit in a regional hospital. The child had been an in-patient on this unit for nine weeks. The mother was concerned about the type and level of medication that was being given to her daughter, and about what appeared to the mother to be a deterioration in her daughter's behavior. This mother was seeking another opinion, as well as specialized children's mental health services for her child. This issue became urgent when the child was abruptly discharged from the unit. The child was returned to her mother's care when, as a result of a labour disruption, she was placed on a unit with a known pedophile. The mother was unable to cope with her daughter and required appropriate help, which she was unable to access.

Action: The CAO immediately intervened. After several contacts with a variety of mental health professionals from various health districts, it was determined that an admission to another hospital would be the preferred plan. Despite consensus by the pediatrician, psychiatrist and health district administration that a placement in a hospital pediatric unit would be in this child's best interests, the absence of qualified 24-hour supervision on the pediatric unit prevented a placement on the unit. An out-of-province placement was considered. In a letter to the CAO, one of the physicians stated: "Sadly, the case of this particular child reflects a concern that has been expressed by physicians and other health care providers for many years regarding the inadequate resources to support appropriate care for children with behavioral and mental health conditions."

Outcome: Fortunately, with the collaborative and persistent efforts of this child's mother, the health professionals and the CAO, the child was admitted to a pediatric unit in a Saskatchewan hospital. The appropriate supports were provided, pediatric and psychiatric evaluations were completed, and the child was subsequently discharged to her mother's care with community-based services. In addition, the Health District, with the service providers, established a task group to review this matter. Recommendations are anticipated from this task group that will address how children with serious behavioral and mental health problems can be appropriately treated. This matter is now a systemic file in the CAO and we will be examining this issue in a broader context.

Multi-Departmental – Children Feel Bullied in the Community

Issue: A mother called to the CAO to talk about problems her children are experiencing in their community.

Background: The family recently moved to this community and her children are afraid of several community children. The mother explained that her children had been threatened and beaten up and that property had been destroyed. The mother had already contacted Social Services and the RCMP and did not get a response from them. She also called the school after an incident where her children were threatened with knives. The principal did inspect the backpacks of the children who had made the threats, but as no knives were found, no further action was taken. The mother also talked to the parents of the other children, but she was herself threatened by one father after she raised these concerns with him.

Action: The Advocate provided this very distressed mother with information and assistance to access a supervisor at Social Services and the RCMP complaints process. The mother agreed to continue to advocate on behalf of her own children and appreciated the information she received.

Outcome: The parent was invited to call the CAO again if the issue remained unresolved.

Health

Health concerns brought to the CAO rose significantly in 2001, increasing from two percent (25 calls) in 2000 to seven percent (81 calls) in 2001. This increase was primarily due to concerns expressed by parents of children that required services that were either no longer provided by the government, or services that are simply not available. These services include access to speech language pathology services, appropriate mental health services for children, drug and alcohol treatment resources for adolescents and concerns over surgical waiting lists for children.

Multi-Departmental Involvement

In 2001, four percent of concerns raised with the CAO involved several government departments. Calls often begin with the focus on one department. However, as the issue is addressed, it becomes apparent that the issue requires the attention of several departments. Although the total number of multi-departmental concerns is still very small, there was a noteable increase in these calls this year (12 in 2000 and 43 in 2001).

Child Death Reviews (CDRs)

When children and youth die while receiving services from a government department or agency, their deaths frequently attract public attention. The public often demands that the services provided to these children be reviewed. Across Canada and in several countries around the world, the review of child deaths is leading to an increased awareness of the factors that not only cause but also contribute to deaths of children. In addition to public accountability, the review of these deaths provides an opportunity to reflect on the service provided and to recommend changes to improve systems and to prevent future deaths.

In May 2001, the CAO released a report: *A Summary of Child Death Reviews: August 1996 to December 1998*. This report provided a summary of the themes and issues identified in the 62 child death reviews that were concluded. We anticipate a response from the government on this report in early 2002.

The CAO presently provides an external review of the deaths of children aged 21 and under who, at the time of their death or in the 12 months preceding their death, were receiving services from the DSS. The Office is currently reviewing the 1999, 2000 and 2001 child deaths in accordance with the policy and protocol established with the DSS. For the years 1999, 2000 and 2001, the DSS notified the CAO of 99 deaths of children. (33 in 1999, 31 in 2000 and 35 in 2001).

In addition, the 18 Indian Child and Family Service (ICFS) agencies have started to notify the CAO when a child receiving services from an ICFS agency dies. To date, we do not know how many of these deaths will require a review by the CAO. However, as these children were receiving services under *The Child and Family Services Act*, we believe these deaths require the same level of review as those children who were receiving similar services directly from the DSS. We anticipate summarizing and publicly reporting our findings and recommendations from a second set of concluded files in 2002.

The Child Death Advisory Committee, chaired by the Children's Advocate and the Chief Coroner, has also recommended that all child deaths in Saskatchewan be reviewed. The practical implications of this recommendation are being reviewed.

Systemic Issues

On a systemic level, the Children's Advocate Office promotes and advocates for changes to government practice, policy or legislation respecting the interests and well-being of children. The Office advocates for improvements to processes through which the interests and viewpoints of children may be expressed, considered, and respected by government when it plans and implements services that impact on children. In addition, the Children's Advocate may make formal recommendations to Saskatchewan government departments or agencies relating to the interests and well-being of children.

Systemic Advocacy

One of the aims of an independent Children's Advocate is to promote respect for the rights of children. This is done in a number of ways, including through systemic advocacy work. The CAO actively identifies specific systemic issues impacting on children and youth. We work to influence legislators, policy-makers and practitioners to consider the rights of children when decisions and plans are being made that impact on children. Specific systemic issues are identified in our Office after careful review of the individual advocacy issues that are presented to the CAO by children, parents and other community advocates. In our experience most individual advocacy issues are satisfactorily resolved and the CAO file is closed with no need for further action. However, even when the individual files are resolved, the broader issue may remain. There may be other children or youth who continue to be impacted by the law, policy or practice that was identified in one or more individual advocacy files.

While the CAO can, and does, identify many issues, it is important that we have a formal framework for undertaking systemic advocacy. Many issues are presented to the CAO by various interest groups or others and these often reflect the competing interests and priorities that are found in our society in general. The CAO has had to be very specific about when and why an issue is defined as systemic before we undertake advocacy action in relation to that issue. Without a formal framework, systemic advocacy can be overwhelming and the frustrations encountered when working towards systemic change could make systems changes appear impossible. Unlike individual advocacy, which tends to be more reactive and situation focused, systemic advocacy focuses on the underlying issues in the broader context.

The tables on the next four pages outline the issues that have been prioritized currently in the CAO. Many of these issues have been identified in previous Annual Reports. Our interest, this year, is to present these issues using the framework we have adapted for our Office. One issue, Dispute Resolution in the School Environment, has been selected as the subject of a Special Report.

How do we decide an issue is "systemic"?

The following advocacy framework and principles guide the CAO in making decisions on whether to pursue a particular issue or concern as a systemic matter:

1. **Mandate.** The issue falls within the mandate and mission of the CAO and affects children and youth that the CAO has the legislated authority to serve.
2. **Issue Selection.** Children or youth themselves, parents or community members have brought the issue to the CAO in relation to their personal concerns. The issue, therefore, arises from or is informed by the citizens that we serve. The issue also involves a current law, policy or practice that in some manner fails to respect the rights or entitlements of children and youth. Criteria to consider include:
   - the gravity and severity of harm;
   - the benefits of modifying the system;
   - the enforceability of a remedy;
   - the relative chance of success;
   - cost;
   - fairness; and
   - agreement on the issue among various groups.
3. **Issue Prioritization.** The CAO must be prepared to adapt to ever-changing priorities.
4. **Issue Action.** For each issue chosen for action, there is a plan that includes the use of objective data and outcome goals.

Adapted from (Cole, D., 1997).

A Summary of Systemic Advocacy Issues

Systemic Concern[1]	Desired Outcome
Standards of care in residential custody and Family Services facilities • Residential facilities operated by the DSS are not required to comply with the basic facility standards outlined in *The Residential Services Act*. • Services at these facilities are provided in accordance with a set of policies, many of which establish appropriate levels of service and care for the children and youth. The existing policies are not consistently applied across facilities. • ICFS agencies have recently established a number of group homes intended to provide, at minimum, an equivalent level of service as is provided by government operated residential facilities. The standards of care in ICFS facilities is an emerging issue in the CAO.	• That standards of care be developed, which clearly outline basic standards of care for youth in residential facilities. These standards must include quality assurance mechanisms, performance expectations and systematic processes to monitor compliance with those standards.

Treatment of youth held in RCMP cells and/or waiting to be transported by the RCMP
• Treatment of youth being held for up to several days in RCMP cells while they are waiting to appear in a provincial court or to be transferred to a youth facility. Issues include:
  • Limited and usually no access to family visits, exercise, school, and appropriate options to maintain personal hygiene; and
  • Safety of youth in relation to adult prisoners who are being transported with the youth.
	• That there be clear, appropriate standards for the holding and transporting of youthful offenders in Saskatchewan. These standards need to be consistent with international rules that protect juveniles deprived of their liberty and they need to be consistently applied throughout Saskatchewan. These standards need to ensure that youthful offenders are treated with dignity keeping in mind that young people who are deprived of their liberty are highly vulnerable to abuse, victimization and the violation of their rights.

Supervision of youth in provincial court cells
• Over-crowded conditions in poorly designed, inadequate facilities, particularly in circuit courts contribute to ongoing problems.
• Safety of youth while being held in the provincial court holding cells. Issues include:
  • Intimidation or assaults by other youth;
  • Long waits;
  • General staff and youth safety;
  • Property damage;
  • Over-crowding; and
  • Limited access to private toilets.
	• That youth held in any facility, including the holding cells attached to the provincial courts, will be cared for and protected in accordance with "standards established by the competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of staff, as well as competent supervision." (Article 3, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1991).

Educational experiences of youth in custody facilities
• Concerns regarding how *The Education Act* is applied for youth who are attending an educational program in a secure custody facility.
• The provision of educational services for youth in custody facilities. Issues include:
  • Program needs;
  • Resources for youth with high needs and special educational requirements; and
  • Accreditation standards.
	• That government will clearly identify how *The Education Act* applies to youth in custody.
	• That youth in custody facilities or other residential facilities will have access to appropriate, fully accredited educational programs that are at least equivalent to those provided in the community by a board of education.

[1] **Note:** Individual Advocacy concerns raised by young people are not included. Advocacy actions and responses to individual issues are ongoing.

Youth in Conflict with the Law

Background	Actions to Date	Next Steps
• The CAO receives numerous calls each year from youth who are concerned about the programs and services provided to them in residential facilities, such as open and secure custody facilities, group homes and other treatment facilities. There have been significant changes and improvements to the facilities, policies and to programs provided in residential facilities in the past few years. These are very much welcomed by the CAO. However, there are still areas requiring improvement.	• The CAO has repeatedly recommended that Saskatchewan establish minimum standards of care for all residential facilities operated directly or indirectly by the government.	• The CAO continues to pursue this issue with the DSS. In addition, with provincial advocates across Canada, the CAO is reviewing how the experiences and opinions of young people in the "system" could be animated to inform the development of a set of national best practice standards of care for youth in custody. This project is expected to be initiated in 2002.
• Youth, RCMP and community members regularly contact the CAO with concerns about inadequate access to appropriate holding facilities and transport (particularly for northern youth). • Individual issues are addressed through individual advocacy processes. However the systemic issues remain unresolved. • The RCMP completed a *Prisoner Escort and Transportation Review* (1999). The review's conclusions and recommendations have yet to be implemented.	• The CAO has raised this issue in correspondence to the DM's of Social Services and Justice since 1997. • The CAO has attended several meetings with the RCMP who are also very concerned about these issues. • This matter has also been reported on in previous CAO Annual Reports (highlighted in 1999 and 2000). • Youth continue to be held in RCMP cells for extended periods of time, often waiting for court and/or transportation to a youth facility.	• The CAO has been asked to convene a meeting of key stakeholders early in 2002 to review this issue again and to work towards a resolution. • The CAO will continue to respond to individual youth or others who contact us with specific complaints. • The CAO is also exploring options for providing these youth with more information about their rights while in these cells or being transported.
• The CAO first received complaints on this issue in 1996. Provincial Court Interview Room, Pelican Narrows	• The CAO has persistently raised the issue. • Concerns in some locations, such as Regina, are now minimal as a result of changes introduced by Saskatchewan Justice. However there are locations where the issues are persistent and not resolved. (Example, see photo taken in Pelican Narrows.) • In 2001, the Saskatchewan Court Securities Review Committee released a comprehensive report. The report's recommendations, if acted upon, would alleviate many of the issues that are repeatedly identified to the CAO.	• The CAO will focus on providing information to youth in these cells regarding their right to contact the CAO in the event that they are not treated fairly. • The CAO will continue to press government to develop a long-term solution to the issue of over-crowded, inadequate court holding facilities in some locations in the province. • Requests for action will continue to be presented to the provincial government and action on this issue is anticipated.
• Access to appropriate educational programs in secure custody facilities was first identified by the CAO to Social Services in 1998. • Rule 38 of the *United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty* states that: "Every juvenile of compulsory school age has the right to education suited to his or her needs and abilities... Such education should be provided outside the detention facility in community schools wherever possible and, in any case by qualified teachers through programmes integrated with the education system of the country...."	• The DSS has advised the CAO that a committee has been established, with representatives from Saskatchewan Education and Justice, to review this issue. This committee has not completed its examination of this issue.	• A response from the committee is expected and the CAO will then review the response in terms of the desired outcomes cited.

A Summary of Systemic Advocacy Issues

Systemic Concern[1]	Desired Outcome

Mental health services
• Access to services for children and youth with mental health issues. Issues include:
  ▪ Waiting times to access assessment and treatment;
  ▪ Appropriateness of some inpatient programs for child/youth patients and the need for child/youth oriented services; and
  ▪ The rights of the children/youth to participate in decision-making regarding the services provided to them.
	• That children and youth in all parts of our province have timely access to appropriate mental health services.
	• That children and youth are informed of their rights in the mental health system, including their rights to privacy, to participate in case and treatment planning, and to an appeal process in the event of a disagreement about a decision.

Services for children with disabilities
• Access to services for children with disabilities. Issues include:
  ▪ Timeliness and appropriateness of service;
  ▪ The need for specialized educational programs, speech and language pathology services and psychological assessments; and
  ▪ Limits to availability of service to those in rural or remote areas of the province.
• Procedures requiring parents to place a child, who is not in need of protection, in an out-of-home placement under child protection legislation, in order to acquire appropriate service for the child.
	• That all children, regardless of geographic location or vulnerabilities, will be provided with an adequate level of support and intervention services to enable them to live their lives in an optimal manner. This ideal is one that is shared by parents and service providers and one that challenges our province to determine what an optimal level of support will include.

Dispute resolution in the school environment • There is a need for independent review and appeal processes when disagreements occur between the student or parent and the school. A formal mechanism is required to ensure that a student or parent who is in dispute with a board of education will be provided with access to processes to resolve the dispute and to a fair and independent review in the event that the dispute is not resolved.	• That an external, independent review process be developed that parents and/or students can access to have complaints or other issues regarding school services resolved and/or reviewed. • That all students and their parents have access to procedures established by the board (of education) for the purposes of investigation and mediation of any differences or conflicts arising in the relationship of a pupil to the school (per section 148 of *The Education Act*). • That the school board is required to make appropriate provisions for the child's education (per many other provinces) when students under the age of 16 are suspended or expelled from school. • That clear provisions be established to ensure that a child's right to an education is respected when the child has special needs, including behavioral problems.
Safeguards for children and youth in foster and group home care[2] • Ensure that children and youth who live in the care of government are provided with the care to which they are entitled. • More children are coming into foster and group home care every year, not just in Saskatchewan but across Canada, and child welfare authorities are struggling to provide quality care in appropriate settings. • In Saskatchewan, over 70 percent of the children and youth living in care are aboriginal children. This fact challenges child welfare authorities to review current practices and, with First Nations, Metis Nation and other aboriginal peoples, find solutions to this urgent problem.	• That Saskatchewan families are supported to care for their own children, while ensuring that the children and youth who are in the care of government are safe and receiving the quality services to which they are entitled. (*Children and Youth in Care Review: LISTEN to Their Voices, 2000*).

[1] **Note:** Individual Advocacy concerns raised by young people are not included. Advocacy actions and responses to individual issues are ongoing.
[2] **Note:** For more detailed information on this subject, please consult the section of this report entitled Social Services Responds to the *Children and Youth in Care Review: LISTEN to Their Voices* or consult the CAO website: www.legassembly.sk.ca/childadvocate/

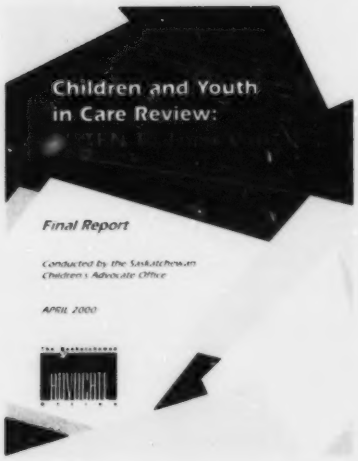
Health, Social and Education Issues

Background	Actions to Date	Next Steps
• Mental health services for children, youth and their families are provided through a variety of programs, including community-based and inpatient services. • Between January 1, 1999 and December 31, 2001, the CAO opened a total of 23 files related to children's mental health services. Case examples have been reported in previous CAO Annual Reports.	• The complaints to the CAO have been compelling and have resulted in the CAO initiating an examination of the mental health services provided to children and youth. • The CAO is currently reviewing the status of this issue in Saskatchewan.	• The CAO is preparing an in-depth review of this issue, which will include extensive discussions with key stakeholders. • The CAO is looking into establishing an appropriate way to communicate information about rights and the CAO to children and youth who receive mental health services.
• Individual families have been contacting the CAO with these issues since the office first opened in 1994. These families are provided individual advocacy services and these issues, individually, are often resolved. • In 2001 the CAO received numerous complaints from a group of parents who collectively identified issues related to limited access to, in particular, speech and language pathology services. Each Health District provides different levels of services and several challenges have been identified by the CAO.	• In 2001, the CAO attended several meetings with parent groups and various government officials to determine the extent of this issue and to ascertain the extent of the problem. The CAO is still in the initial stages of this information gathering phase.	• The CAO is approaching this issue in phases. Phase One, which will be finalized in 2002, is to gather information related to the issue. Phase Two will include reviewing outstanding questions and developing recommendations appropriate to the issue.
• While the CAO does not have legislated authority to formally review decisions of boards of education, parents and students regularly contact the CAO seeking assistance to resolve disputes or regarding other matters related to decisions of boards of education. Children have a right to an education and a responsibility to exercise this right in an appropriate and reasonable manner. School systems struggle to provide the range of services necessary to meet the needs of all students.	• The CAO presented these issues to both the Special Education Review Committee (March 1999) and to the Task Force and Public Dialogue on the Role of the School (August 1999). In response to the Final Report of the Task Force, the CAO prepared a detailed analysis of existing Canadian legislation and policies as these relate to dispute resolution processes in schools in Canada. This information was provided to the Minister of Education for his consideration. Government is preparing a formal response to the Task Force recommendations. This response is expected to be released early in 2002.	• The CAO will review the government response to the Task Force Final Report and continue to advocate for a fair, independent dispute resolution and review process to be available to all students and their parents.
• Ensuring that children and youth who live in the care of government are provided with the care to which they are entitled has been a priority concern of the CAO since its inception in 1994. To date, approximately 35 percent of all concerns raised with the CAO each year concern Family Services issues.	• In June 1998, the CAO released its review of the death of Karen Quill. Social Services made changes following the report, which were documented in two progress reports to the CAO. • In April 2000, the CAO released the *Children and Youth in Care Review: LISTEN to Their Voices*, an external, independent review of the foster care system in Saskatchewan. In June 2001, Social Services publicly responded to the report and announced a major redesign of child welfare. • Nationally, the CAO is a participant in the Centre of Excellence in Child Welfare and the Western Provincal Working Group on Permanency Planning.	• The CAO will continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendations from the Children and Youth in Care Review and the progress of the child welfare redesign. • Through its participation at the national level, the CAO will continue to examine the issues and needs of children living in the permanent or long-term care of government.

Social Services Responds

Children & Youth in Care Review: LISTEN to Their Voices

On April 12, 2000, the CAO released the report of its external, independent review of the foster care system in Saskatchewan. The report, *Children and Youth in Care Review: LISTEN to Their Voices*, was initiated due to concerns raised by a number of individuals and groups, particularly young people already in care. It was also prompted by the tragic death of Karen Rose Quill in her foster home in 1997.



In the spring of 2000, the then Minister of Social Services, Harry Van Mulligen, made a commitment to, within one year, publicly report on the progress his department had made in response to the recommendations in the Review. This report from the DSS was made public in June 2001.

The CAO was pleased to note that the DSS accepted the recommendations made in both the Child Death Review of Karen Rose Quill and the Children and Youth in Care Review. The DSS recognized that there are problems in the child welfare system and have made considerable progress towards compliance with the recommendations made by the Children's Advocate.

In addition, the DSS concluded that actions taken in response to the Children's Advocate's review of the foster care system would only address some of the issues with the child welfare system. The DSS concluded "that a broad based system change was needed as upgrades to certain portions of the system would not achieve and sustain change" (Saskatchewan Social Services, June 2001).

In June 2001, the DSS publicly announced a major redesign of child welfare in Saskatchewan. This redesign was developed with input from a variety of key stakeholders. The strategic directions and the major goals of child welfare redesign are consistent with the recommendations made by the CAO in the Children and Youth in Care Review. The work that is currently in progress in Social Services is impressive and they are commended for the commitment they have made to children and youth. The important goals identified by the DSS must be realized in order for vulnerable Saskatchewan children and families to be appropriately supported and nurtured.

Goals of Child Welfare Redesign

- **Providing high quality care for children and youth in the care of the Minister;**
- **Supporting the community in their efforts to prevent the need for child welfare services;**
- **Providing services that increase the capacity of families to safely care for children and youth in their homes;**
- **Providing permanent families for children and preparing youth for independence;**
- **Working with First Nations and Metis people to provide culturally appropriate programs and services;**
- **Encouraging and supporting community involvement and ownership in programs and services for vulnerable children and youth; and**
- **Improving performance through development of and reporting on accountability measures.**

(Saskatchewan Social Services, January, 2002).

"The *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which Canada ratified in 1991, clearly recognizes that the State cannot parent a child; that is the role of families. But what the State can and should do is ensure the well-being of children by creating the conditions that free parents (and other primary caretakers) to look after and nurture the children who have come into their lives with all the love and respect they deserve."

(Children and the Hill. Spring 2001)

It is quite common for those of us working at the CAO to be asked: "What has really changed since your report?" As the report was released almost two years ago, there is some healthy skepticism about the impact of the recommendations and some criticism that nothing is really different. While it is true that there are still many issues to address, the CAO is convinced that there is a sincere commitment to making meaningful changes to improve the lives of children. There is a commitment to preventing, where possible, involvement in the child welfare system while providing high quality services to those children and families in the system. The CAO is also committed to continued vigilance in this area. The CAO will continue to relentlessly pursue our mission to ensure that the rights of children and youth are respected and valued in our communities and in government practice, policy and legislation.

Issues Facing the Child Welfare System

The sad reality is that the number of children coming into the child welfare system is still increasing and the pressures experienced by service providers are continuing. This is a phenomenon occurring across our nation and one that requires a comprehensive national review. The CAO is privileged to participate in two promising initiatives underway at a national level.

- The Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare (CECW) is now established. The CECW has also supported the establishment of a First Nations Research Site in Winnipeg through the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. It is anticipated that particular issues impacting on First Nations and other aboriginal children in the child welfare system will be examined. (Note: To contact the CECW, consult their website at www/cecw-cepb.ca)

- The Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates has, along with the Canadian Child Welfare Directors, youth in and from care, and some representatives of First Nations child welfare authorities, continued the collaborative project examining the issues and needs of children living in the permanent or long-term care of government. A Western Provinces Working Group has been formed and has prepared a comprehensive paper examining Permanency Planning for children in care. What has been learned by simply doing an analysis of the trends is quite disturbing. Based on the known figures, the number of children entering the child welfare system, particularly the number of aboriginal children in care, is of grave concern. Preliminary results of the project indicate that more information is needed to effectively plan next steps.

"Placed in historical perspective, the last few years have been a time of turbulence and change in child and family policy. Key governance challenges include how to build a common vision and purpose, foster cooperation, and create a shared culture between governments and communities, across government departments, within the service delivery network, and between governments. One challenge is to improve relationships between governments, including those of Aboriginal peoples, as well as their organizations, and communities. Another will be to ensure that voluntary agencies are able to maintain their advocacy role in the new environment. Accountability for child and family policy, and for improved outcomes for children, requires solid information, concerted efforts at communication across and within sectors, and effective outcome measurement tools."

(Thompson, S., Maxwell, J. & Stroick, S., December, 1999).

Special Report

Dispute Resolution in the School Environment

A comparison of provincial/territorial education legislation

In the spring of 1999, the Saskatchewan Government initiated a task force to conduct public dialogue and make recommendations concerning the role of schools in dealing with the impact of profound societal changes on the needs of children and youth. The CAO presented its views respecting Saskatchewan schools to the *Task Force and Public Dialogue on the "Role of Schools."* In its presentation, the CAO raised several areas of particular concern, specifically student and parent access to fair and consistent mediation, investigation, review, and appeal processes in the event of a disagreement or dispute.

The Task Force concluded that, at present, students have little formal opportunity for input into policy creation and decision-making. The recommendations of the Task Force advocate for student participation that is central to both the development and application of school policy. The Task Force also noted that while many examples of positive relations between parents, schools and teachers existed, there was also a problematic element to this relationship. As a result, the Task Force advocated that the role of the parents as active participants in the education of their children be affirmed and promoted and that mechanisms be established to facilitate the school/parent partnership. However, the Task Force did not address the CAO's concern regarding accessibility to fair and consistent mediation, investigation, review, and appeal processes.

As a result, the CAO initiated a project to compare the review and appeal processes found within provincial and territorial legislation in Canada. The project looked at general dispute resolution, suspension (from attendance at school and/or school privileges), expulsion, and special education. These issues were examined with a view to both parent and student access and whether existing processes were internal or external to the system.

In addition, the project also examined Saskatchewan school divisions' policies in relation to section 148 and 186.1 of *The Education Act*. Unfortunately, of the 100 Saskatchewan school divisions that were contacted, less than 25 percent responded. Therefore, the CAO is still unclear about the current status of dispute resolution processes and policies in Saskatchewan. Highlights of the project are provided below.

***The Education Act* provides that a "parent or guardian, on behalf of that pupil, is entitled to immediate access to procedures established by the board of education or the conseil scolaire for the purposes of investigation and mediation of any difference or conflicts."**

Saskatchewan, *The Education Act* (1995), As am. by s.s. 2001.

Section 148 of *The Education Act* outlines the general dispute resolution process that currently exists in Saskatchewan. The provincial/territorial comparison found that:

Student Access: Saskatchewan is the only province that limits its access to the general dispute resolution process to parents only.

Internal or External Review Process: There are no external or independent review processes for the resolution of general disputes in Canada. All review processes remain local at the school board or district level. Two jurisdictions have legislated for the establishment of local appeal boards.

Subject of Appeal: In Saskatchewan section 148 is broad in that it provides for the investigation and mediation of any differences or conflicts in the relationship of a pupil to the school. Each jurisdiction uses different definitions to describe the subject of an appeal.

Opportunity to be Heard: Quebec, Prince Edward Island, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories/Nunavut allow for the opportunity for student views to be heard; each provide different definitions.

In addition, of the 18 Saskatchewan school divisions who provided policies to the CAO with respect to section 148 of *The Education Act*, in all instances, the review process is internal with the final decision resting with the school board. Two of the 18 school divisions facilitated student access to a review of decisions.

Section 154 of *The Education Act* provides for the suspension of a student from school for up to a year. A principal suspension can be appealed to the director and the pupil and parent will be granted a hearing. The board of education, or an appointed committee, may suspend a student from all or any of the schools in the division for up to a year. The board will review a board suspension at its expiration if requested by the pupil or parent with a view to rescinding, varying the suspension or admitting the pupil to school on terms and conditions. The provincial comparison found the following:

"A principal may suspend a student from school for not more than three days at a time for overt opposition to authority or serious misconduct."

"A principal may suspend a pupil for a period not exceeding 10 school days...[where] the pupil has:
(a) persistently displayed overt opposition to authority;
(b) refused to conform to rules of the school;
(c) been irregular in attendance;
(d) habitually neglected his or her duties;
(e) wilfully destroyed school property;
(f) used profane or improper language; or
(g) engaged in any other type of gross misconduct."

Saskatchewan, *The Education Act* (1995) As am. by s.s. 2001

Reasons for Suspension: Across Canada, some of the terms used for the justification of suspension lack clarity and allow very broad discretion when suspension is being considered.

Length of Suspension: The maximum length of a suspension varies by jurisdiction. In Saskatchewan, suspensions can be given for up to one year, while in Alberta, a suspension greater than ten days is considered expulsion; in Ontario, the maximum is 20 days. Four jurisdictions do not have separate provisions for expulsion, but include the appeal process for expulsion with the suspension process. This results in the absence of a maximum limit placed on suspensions.

Internal or External Review: In all but two jurisdictions, the resolution process concerning suspension of a student is local. New Brunswick has established a School Appeals Committee and a District Appeals Committee, and the Northwest Territories has established a District Education Authority Appeal Committee.

Teacher Suspension: In Saskatchewan, a teacher can exclude any pupil from class for overt opposition to the teacher's authority or other gross misconduct. Ontario advocacy groups have expressed concern about the extension of the right to suspend students to teachers, stating that the rights of students are better protected under a system where only the principal has the right to suspend.

Accommodating Special Needs and Young Children: With the exception of Ontario, there is no accommodation respecting suspension or expulsion for young children or children with special needs who may not be aware of the consequences of their actions or be responsible for their behavior.

Student Participation: Student participation at suspension hearings and investigative proceedings respecting suspension is provided for in *The Education Act*. While student participation is generally provided for across Canada, some provinces have restricted access to students based on age.

Representation: The New Brunswick School Administration regulations state that the person appealing has the right to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by any person serving in an advocacy or support capacity. Nova Scotia's Education Act provides for the attendance of counsel at a hearing. The opportunity to have representation is essential if an appeal or review process is to be viewed as fair. Representation of this nature is restricted in Saskatchewan.

Section 155 of *The Education Act* provides for the expulsion of a student. In Saskatchewan, a board of education or conseil scolaire may expel a pupil from any or all schools in the school division or francophone education area for a period greater than one year. After one year, the pupil and his or her parent or guardian may request a review of the decision. Newfoundland is the only province that directs an expelled student to be re-admitted to school at the commencement of the new year. The provincial/territorial comparision found:

Reasons for Expulsion: Although, generally, more safeguards are built into the legislation for expulsion, as with suspensions, the lack of clarity of terms allows for significant discretion when expulsion of a student is being considered.

Accommodating Special Needs and Young Children: Currently there are no Canadian jurisdictions that provide accommodation for young children and children with special needs respecting expulsion.

Internal or External Review Process: Currently, there are only two territories and one province which have legislated appeal processes beyond the local level: Alberta, Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

Student Access: Saskatchewan, Quebec and the Northwest Territories/Nunavat provide access with no restrictions for pupils to be heard during the review or appeal process respecting expulsion.

***The Education Act* provides that "a board of education, by resolution, may exclude a pupil from attendance at any or all schools in the school division for a period of greater than one year where, in the opinion of the board, it is appropriate to do so..."**

Saskatchewan. *The Education Act (1995)* As am. by s.s. 2001.

A Saskatachewan Education Committee recommended in its final report in 1996 that *The Education Act* be amended requiring that boards of education make appropriate arrangements for a child's education when contemplating suspension or expulsion of a student under the age of 16. Provinces/territories that have legislated in this area are British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and the Northwest Territories/Nunavat.

Section 186.1 of *The Education Act* outlines the resolution process to be used regarding disputes arising from the designation, placement or program for a student with a disability. Section 50.1 of the *Education Regulations* outlines the conditions where the right to a review, under section 186.1 of the Act does not apply.

The provincial/territorial comparison found that Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and the Yukon were the only provinces/territories to provide for an external review process in the area of special education disputes. In Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories/Nunavat and the Yukon, both the pupil and the parent or guardian have access to the resolution process.

Regarding education of pupils with a disability, *The Education Act* provides that "the pupil, or the parent or guardian of that pupil, shall have immediate access to the process established by the board of education or conseil scolaire for the resolution of these types of disagreements:
(a) the designation of the pupil or the failure to designate the pupil;
(b) the placement of the pupil;
(c) the program provided to the pupil.

Saskatchewan. *The Education Act (1995)* As am. by s.s. 2001.

The *Education Regulations*, state that "the right to a review does not apply where the disagreement with respect to the placement of the child is based on:

(a) parental preference as to the location of the delivery of the program;

(b) parental convenience;

(c) other factors unrelated to the impact of the location of the educational instruction on the child's education and development;

(d) location within an educational institution;

(e) any other reason that relates to or is similar in nature to those listed in clauses (a) to (d); or

(f) an allegation of discrimination pursuant to the *Human Rights Code* or the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Saskatchewan. *Education Regulations (1986)*. As am. by s.s. 2001.

The CAO received the policies established pursuant to section 186.1 from 22 of the 100 Saskatchewan school divisions. In all instances, the review process was internal with the board as the final decision-maker.

The CAO does not have the legislated authority to review or investigate issues regarding schools or school boards. The only Canadian province to have investigative powers over schools, boards, and governing bodies of professional and occupational associations (i.e. a Teachers' Federation) is British Columbia.

In summary, the CAO comparison project identified the following concerns regarding schools in Saskatchewan:

1. The absence of an external, independent review process that parents and/or students can access to review complaints or other issues.
2. The absence of student access to the mediation processes established by school divisions in relation to section 148 of *The Education Act*.
3. The inconsistency (and possible absence) of Saskatchewan school division policies pursuant to sections 148 and 186.1 of *The Education Act*.
4. The absence of a requirement for school boards to make appropriate arrangements for a child's education when contemplating suspension or expulsion of a student who is under the age of 16 years.
5. The absence of a legislated accommodation, when school boards are considering suspending or expelling students with special needs and young children who may not have the ability to control their behavior or the ability to understand the foreseeable consequences of their behavior.
6. The need for a clear process and upper limit when children are suspended multiple times for short periods of time.
7. The absence of a review process for expulsions, if the student and/or parent requests a review before the end of the expulsion period.

The CAO is hopeful that the Final Report of the Task Force and the government response to the report will be a catalyst to generate the change envisioned by this public dialogue. The CAO anticipates, at minimum, that the Task Force Final Report will prompt major change to the legislation and regulations that currently govern schools in Saskatchewan.

In October 2001, the Children's Advocate wrote to the Minister of Education requesting a review of the information contained in the CAO comparison document. The CAO urged the Minister to consider formalizing fair, respectful dispute resolution and discipline processes that are inclusive of both the students and their parents and further requested that the Minister include provisions in his response to the Task Force report that address the concerns raised. In his response to the CAO, the Minister indicated that in developing a response to the recommendations in the Task Force, government would need to take into consideration the feedback it received from those such as the Children's Advocate.

Community Advocacy

Promoting Advocacy and Children's Rights

In addition to the specific systemic issues files, the CAO also identified a set of issues and activities that we have define as Community Advocacy. These community-based advocacy issues regarding the well-being of children emerged in our Office through a variety of channels.

The CAO is committed to staying informed on these matters and, where appropriate, raising awareness of the issue among children, youth and adults. For children's well-being, interests and rights to be appreciated, they must be understood. Producing and disseminating information about children's well-being and children's rights, explaining how those rights can be enforced, why those rights are important and the responsibilities we have to respect rights is an important function of the CAO. The CAO regularly participates in events or meetings which we believe will further the well-being, interests and rights of Saskatchewan children.

Community Advocacy

The Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade

In June 2001, the *Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade* presented its Final Report to the Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly. In November, the CAO submitted observations and comments to the Minister of Social Services for consideration as the government prepared its response to the recommendations of the Special Committee. The CAO commended the Special Committee and the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly for their commitment to the very serious issue of the sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children.

The Working Group to Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children (Saskatoon Communities for Children) conducted interviews with 46 young women who were themselves formerly involved in the sex trade. "Youth were asked, 'What changes would you like to see in services?' Youth felt that current services were on the 'right track'; however there need to be more services (outreach, places to hangout and stay), there need to be better services (e.g. detoxification programs being more accessible and free, with more hours of operation, a better location and more people who have been there or who are aboriginal). Furthermore, it was reported that the people providing these services (police, counselors, detox) need to be more understanding and educated about relevant issues. Others changes were requested in terms of '*see more guys getting arrested for picking us up and less of us getting arrested*', better places to live, and more money."

(MacDernott, W., January, 2001).

In reflecting on the Special Committee recommendations, the concept that more children could be involved in either voluntary or involuntary out-of-home placements is disturbing to the CAO. Child welfare and young offender services in our province are already seriously challenged to provide respectful, safe care to the children they are currently serving. It is imperative to find a way to bring fewer, not more, children into care. Many of the recommendations in the Final Report illustrate an urgent need for addictions services, mental health services, and educational programs that fully serve the needs of vulnerable children. Children who are disconnected from "mainstream" services require flexible, individualized programs.

The CAO also pointed out to the Minister that children have made it very clear that they do not want to be involuntarily detained. These children are seeking support to live safely, attend inclusive schools and get their addiction and mental health needs met. The CAO requested that, in the event that government did elect to create a protective secure care system, every child be guaranteed a visit by the Children's Advocate Office.

Finally, the use of intrusive measures, such as physical and mechanical restraints and extensive periods of isolated room confinement were raised with the Minister as an issue that would require regulations consistent with respectful standards of practice and with existing law. In the event that these children were to be involuntarily detained, this would become a serious issue. The use of these intrusive measures with children who have also been sexually assaulted/exploited and who are predominately female and aboriginal, raised, for the CAO, many serious concerns.

(Note: In March 2002, when this report was being prepared, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan introduced *The Emergency Protection for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Act* in the Legislative Assembly. The CAO supports the direction the government has taken with this legislation to protect children and youth from exploitation through the sex trade. The CAO is hopeful that government will continue to put into place the necessary supports for these children and youth.)

Age of Consent to Medical Treatment

The age at which a child can consent to medical treatment is an issue that young people, their parents and others are frequently confused about. The CAO receives calls about this matter from time to time. Callers are advised that there is no specific age defined at which a child (or any person) can consent to medical treatment. This is a matter for the medical practitioners and other service providers to determine with the patient. Up to December 2001, however, surgical operations required the consent of a parent or guardian if the patient was unmarried and under 18 years of age. This regulation created a great deal of confusion when, for example, an unmarried mother under age eighteen could provide consent for her child's surgical operation but not for her own.

In December 2001, section 55 of *The Hospital Standards Regulations* was repealed and now patients, regardless of age or marital status can consent to their own medical treatment when they are able to understand the full extent of the treatment options. The repeal of this section of the regulations means that consent for surgical operations is obtained in the same manner as for all medical treatment. The CAO was pleased to see this section repealed as young people are now provided the same rights in this regard as any other patient. Further information about patients' rights can be obtained directly from health care professionals or from the PLEA website: www.plea.org/.

Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates

The Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates (CCPCYA) is an alliance of the five provincially appointed Children's Advocates from the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario; the Nova Scotia Children's Ombudsman; the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse from the province of Quebec; and the British Columbia Children's Commissioner. Although the mandates of each office differ, the Council shares a common commitment to further the voice, rights and dignity of children. We were pleased that the province of Newfoundland introduced legislation to create a Children's Advocate in their province. As President of the Council for 2001, Saskatchewan's Children's Advocate was invited to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories to discuss the creation of a Children's Advocate Office in their Territory. The Council continues to act as a national voice for the rights of children and youth.

"We must ensure that our children are a national priority. We must make this great national objective a major focus of what are always limited resources."

(The Prime Minister of Canada, January 31, 2001).

From left to right:
Marlene Budler, Kanaweyimik Child and Family Services Inc., Bryan Clarke, Indian and Northern Affairs, Cindy Blackstock, Caring for First Nations Children's Society. Photo taken at CCPCYA National Meeting, Saskatoon, October 2001.

In October 2001, the Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office was honoured to host the annual meeting and workshop of the Council in Saskatoon. Training sessions focused on gaining a greater understanding of the issues impacting on the children we serve; in particular Aboriginal children in the child welfare system and young people who are in trouble with the law. The Council decided to proceed with three major projects including:

- A review of the needs and issues of children and youth who are living in the permanent care of the governments of the four western provinces;
- The ongoing issues related to First Nations children as identified in the First Nations Child and Family Services Joint National Policy Review (Assembly of First Nations with First Nations Child and Family Service Agency Representatives in Partnership with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Canada);
- Standards of Care in Youth Custody Facilities and a project to ensure that youth voice is gathered to inform provincial and national standards of care and in anticipation of the implementation of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

Youth Criminal Justice Act

It is anticipated that the new *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA) will come into force in 2003. The CAO and the CCPCYA have a particular interest in the YCJA. This Act will have significant implications for youth and service providers.

"When Canada signed the Convention in 1990, child advocates were hopeful. They envisioned a new practice of children's rights in Canada. However, their vision has yet to be realized. The gap between the promise of the Convention and current practice means that many children in Canada continue to develop in socially toxic environments. One reason that we have not met the challenge of children's rights is that Canada has not responded vigorously enough to children's unmet needs and rights. But even the most vigorous of reactive policies and programs will not secure the rights of children. Proactive measures are necessary. The primary reason Canada has failed to meet the challenge of children's rights is because insufficient emphasis has been given to proactive or preventive policies, laws, and programs. Taking children's rights seriously requires a true Children's Agenda that is focused on the development of comprehensive proactive approaches to children's well-being."

(Covell, K. & Howe R., 2001).

To this end, the Council made presentations to Standing Committees of the House of Commons and the Senate. In addition, Justice Canada sponsored the completion of a discussion paper on Standards of Care for Youth in Custody prepared by the Ontario Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy.

In June 2001, Children's Advocates and Ombudsmen from across the country met to discuss care and service issues related to youth in custody. An outcome of this meeting was to begin a national project to examine these issues. It is anticipated that this project will be fully operational, with funding from Justice Canada, in 2002.

Administration

During 2001, the CAO undertook to develop a three-year strategic plan. The CAO is currently implementing strategies to deliver the goals and objectives.

Goal I:

Respect for the Rights and Dignity of Children.

Goal II:

Systemic Change to Improve the Interests and Well-Being of Children.

Goal III:

Deliver Quality Services.

Staff

as at December 2001*

Glenda Cooney, Deputy Children's Advocate
John Brand, Advocate
Vanesa Fehr, Advocate, CDR (Term)
Marcel St. Onge, Advocate
Roxane Schury, Advocate, CDR
Shaun Soonias, Advocate
Elaine Thomas, Advocate
Rhonda Johannson, Advocate, Intake
Sherry Bar, Advocate Assistant, CDR (Term)
Kathy Pawluk, Advocate Assistant, Intake (Casual)
Amanda Doucette, Youth Co-ordinator (Contract)

Sharon Chapman, Director of Communications

Bernie Rodier, Human Resources and Financial Administrator
Sandi Elliott, Administrative Assistant (Term)
Penny Fairburn, Administrative Assistant
Sharon Giesbrecht, Administrative Assistant (Term)
Teri McDonald, Data/Document Processing Clerk (Term)
Caroline Sookocheff, Executive Administrative Assistant

Gordon Mayer, General Counsel (Provincial Ombudsman & Children's Advocate)

Children's Advocate Budget

	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
Personnel Services	606,000	671,000	809,000
Contractual Services	185,330	240,523	150,233
Advertising, Printing & Publishing	44,853	34,553	33,203
Travel & Business	100,329	118,850	118,864
Supplies & Services	9,300	10,901	6,700
Capital Assets	5,188	6,550	0
TOTAL	$ 951,000	$1,082,377	$ 1,118,000

Appendix A –

Presentations by the Children's Advocate Office

Conferences, Public Consultations and Annual Meeting

- *AWASIS*, Saskatoon
- *A Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder Symposium*, Prince Albert Grand Council, Prince Albert
- *Children Under 12 Who Offend, Community Roudtable Discussion*, Catholic Family Services, Saskatoon
- *Community Policy Workshop: Improving Saskatoon's Quality of Life Workshop*, University Institute for Social Research, Saskatoon
- *Eighth Annual First Nations Youth Gathering Conference*, Ile-a-la-Crosse
- *Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Conference*, Regina
- *Inclusion of Child & Youth Voices in Policy Development Seminar*, University of Regina Social Policy Research Unit, Regina
- *Human Services Resource Fair*, Family Support Centre and Saskatchewan Social Services, Saskatoon
- *National Therapeutic Care Conference: Healing the Circle-Children, Families & Communities*, Four Directions Child & Family Services Inc., Saskatoon
- *Reclaiming Our Children and Youth: A Shared Response*, Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers, Saskatoon
- *2001 Saskatchewan: A Focus on Youth - Prairie Northern Conference on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Conference*, Government of Saskatchewan Saskatchewan Insitute on Prevention of Handicaps, Saskatoon
- *Youth Justice in Multicultural, and Multiracial Urban Centers National Roundtable*, Ottawa
- *Presentation on the Youth Criminal Justice Act (Bill C-7)*, The Senate of Canada, Ottawa
- *Report Card on Child Poverty Media Conference*, Saskatoon Communities for Children, Saskatoon
- Youth Health & Resource Fair, Curteen Wellness Centre, Saskatoon

Northern Public Consultations

- Beauval
- Creighton
- Fond du Lac
- Ile-a-la-Crosse
- La Loche
- Pelican Narrows
- Sandy Bay
- Stony Rapids

Community Groups and Agencies

- College of Physicians and Surgeons, Saskatoon
- Community Service Village, Saskatoon
- First Nations Directors of Education, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Saskatoon
- Homelessness Project, Saskatoon Tribal Council Urban First Nation Servicess, Saskatoon
- La Loche Foster Families Association, La Loche
- Living Sky Health District, Lanigan, Watrous, Wynyard
- Mental Health Advisory Committee, Saskatoon District Health Board, Saskatoon
- Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Regina General Hospital, Regina District Health, Regina
- Northern Human Services Partnership Youth Sub-committee, La Ronge
- Northwest Territitories Social Services and Health Agencies, Yellowknife
- Onion Lake Foster Parent Assocation, Onion Lake
- Parent Council Group, Saskatoon
- Prince Albert Foster Parents Association, Prince Albert
- Provincial Interagency Netork on Disabilities, Saskatchewan Association for Community Living, Yorkton
- Regina Foster Families Association, Pense
- Saskatchewan Mental Health Advisory Council, Regina
- Saskatoon Tribal Council Safe House, Saskatoon
- Saskatoon Children's Shelter, Saskatoon
- Tisdale Successful Mother Support Program, Melfort
- YWCA, Saskatoon

Post Secondary Education Students

- Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon
- School of Human Justice, University of Regina, Regina
- Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina, Regina
- Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina, Saskatoon
- Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, Saskatoon

Government Departments or Agencies (including provincial)

- Child Abuse Protocol Committee, Regina Children's Justice Center, Saskatchewan Social Services, Regina
- League of Educational Administrators & Directors (LEADS), Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (STF), Regina
- Policy & Planning Unit, Department of Education, Regina, Saskatoon
- Provincial Court Justices, Saskatoon
- Region 5 Education Directors, Melfort
- Regional Directors of Education, Saskatchewan Education, Regina
- Saskatchewan Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, Regina
- Saskatchewan Police Commission, McDougall Ready Barristers and Solictors, Regina
- Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, Regina
- Saskatchewan Victim Services, Saskatoon
- Saskatoon Youth Justice Committee, Saskatoon
- Saskatchewan Social Services
  - Saskatoon Youth Unit, Saskatoon
  - Regional and Service Centre Offices, Buffalo Narrows, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon, Stony Rapids (La Ronge)
  - Saskatoon Social Services Youth Facilities
    - North Battleford Youth Centre, North Battleford
    - Paul Dojack Youth Centre, Regina
    - Nisbet Youth Centre, Prince Albert

Youth

- Drumminghill Youth Centre, North Battleford
- Echo Valley Provincial Park (Paul Dojack Youth Centre), Regina
- Four Directions Child & Family Services Inc., Muskowekwan First Nation, Lestock
- House of Concord, Regina
- Kilburn Hall Youth Centre, Saskatoon
- Nisbet Youth Centre, Prince Albert
- North Battleford Youth Centre, North Battleford
- North Battleford Youth Centre, Battleford Tribal Council, North Battleford
- Paul Dojack Youth Centre, Regina
- Pikiwek Treatment Group Home, Cote First Nation, Kamsack
- Wicitizon Treatment Group Home, Keeseekoose First Nation, Pelly

Indian Children and Family Service Agencies

- Athabasca Dene Child and Family Services: Fond du Lac, Hatchet Lake, Black Lake
- Battlefords Tribal Council Child and Family Services, North Battleford
- Lac La Ronge Indian Child and Family Services, La Ronge
- Regional Directors of Northern ICFS Agencies, Prince Albert

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